

LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT THE

HALL OF THE NORMAL UNIVERSITY,

APRIL 19TH, 1865,

BY RICHARD EDWARDS.

PEORIA, ILLINOIS:
N. C. NASON, PRINTER, 32 FULTON ST.
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CORRESPONDENCE.

NORMAL, APRIL 20, 1865.

PRESIDENT EDWARDS,—

Dear Sir: At a meeting of the citizens of Normal, held this day at W. G. Parr's store, the undersigned were chosen a Committee to request of you for publication a copy of your Address on the Life and Character of the late ABRAHAM LINCOLN, to which they listened yesterday in the Hall of the Normal University. A compliance with this request will greatly oblige

Yours truly,

L. A. HOVEY,
E. C. HEWETT,
GEORGE DIETRICH,
B. SMITH,
J. R. DUNN, } Committee.

NORMAL, APRIL 21, 1865.

L. A. HOVEY, ESQ., PROF. E. C. HEWETT, AND OTHERS,—

Gentlemen: If in your opinion the publication of the thoughts presented at the University Hall on Wednesday will subserve any good purpose, I will cheerfully furnish a copy.

Very respectfully yours,

R. EDWARDS.

A D D R E S S.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS:

I appear before you to-day with a preparation entirely unworthy of this great occasion. If every wakeful moment that has elapsed since the exercise was resolved upon had been devoted to the work, it would have been far too short a time for the elaboration of the high and mournful theme. But I find a consolation for this want of adequate previous thought in the reflection that the grief that afflicts us to-day, the terrible sorrow that has taken hold of the great heart of this nation, is too profound for any utterance. Our anguish is too poignant for words, however charged with woe. On such a theme, eloquence is a mockery. Forms of speech that have been prostituted to ordinary uses would profane the unutterable agony of the hour. To-day all human utterance seems commonplace; all expressions of ordinary grief seem mean and inadequate. Every heart is full of its own inexpressible emotion; and the silent look, the mute grasp of the hand, reveals it to every sympathizing heart more eloquently than the most finished periods or the most burning words. Our late beloved Chief Magistrate was endeared to every individual of the loyal millions of this people, as only a very few rulers have been to those whom they governed. Each feels as if the dastardly blow, inflicted as the last insane effort of a desperate and fiendish cause, had been struck at a member of his own household. We mourn not merely for a public man, but for a dearly-beloved friend and brother,—one whose kindly heart and honest purposes had captivated our af-

fections, even as his noble patriotism and high wisdom had compelled our esteem and admiration.

For the few moments, then, during which we shall remain together, let us endeavor to study somewhat the significance of these terrible events, and some of the lessons taught us, as individuals and as a nation, by the life and death of ABRAHAM LINCOLN. For great men are given to the race for high and noble purposes. Every mighty intellect, every mind that can soar to the contemplation of the glorious works of God, or penetrate to the profound mysteries of his eternal plans, that can translate into ordinary speech the laws of the material universe and of mind, that can discern and interpret God's truth in nature, in history, or in revelation; or every great soul, cherishing high moral purposes, "smitten with the love of virtue, scorning all meanness and defying all peril, hearing in its own conscience a voice louder than threatenings and thunders, reposing an unfaltering trust in God in the darkest hour, ever ready to be offered up on the altar of its country or of mankind,"—every such mind and soul is a gift of God to man. When men have gone on for ages, and lost the vitality of some truth, mistaking for its essence some old form in which it had been clothed to meet the appreciation of a rude age, a new messenger is sent,—a seer,—one whose intellectual vision or moral insight is clearer than that of his fellows, who, seeing what others fail to see, is prepared to restate or reënact the great principle, in a form befitting the needs of his own and of future generations; and men once more emerge from the darkness, and another morning dawns upon their eyes. Ever and anon, along the pathway of the centuries, we find a bright beacon of this kind, set up for the illumination of succeeding times,—a Socrates or a Luther, a Tell or a Washington, a Hampden or a Lincoln. These are the gifts of a loving Father to his benighted and fallen children. They are sent as powers to lift the race into higher and higher planes of being. By successive and cumulative labors the progress of man is secured.

And we are under obligation to learn the high lessons these messengers would teach us. With every noble character presented for

their contemplation, the responsibilities and duties of the race are vastly increased. Woe be to us, then, if we fail to gather up the wisdom they leave us, if we fail to cherish their memories, and to incorporate their noble characteristics into our own mental and moral constitutions; if, in short, we fail to be wiser, better, nobler men on account of the wise, good and noble men whom God has sent as our teachers.

The first and most obvious lesson taught us by our national history, especially in recent years, is that, as a people, we have ever been the objects of divine care and protection. The fatal news that flashed over the wires on Friday night last almost terrified us into the belief that a new and most fearful danger had beset our government,— that the assassin had pierced the vital spot in our nation's being, that those who have so malignantly sought its life were to have their fiendish desires gratified. But a moment's reflection dispelled the doleful misgiving. We recalled the great events in our national history. We remembered the little band of conscientious worshipers on board the Mayflower, how they had been preserved from the dangers of the deep, from the inclemency of a winter eminent for its severity even in New England, from the tomahawk of the exasperated savage, from pestilence and famine; how from a colony so insignificant that the politicians of the age scarce deigned to notice its existence, it expanded into mighty states, and became the controlling power in the civilization and public policy of a continent; how when its people were oppressed by their own king and the government of their native land, the principle of liberty trampled upon in their persons, God raised up for their protection and guidance the wise, the good, the great man, whose name has for near a hundred years adorned the page of history with a lustre unparalleled among the greatest men of former times; how in succeeding years all schemes against our nation's life have been frustrated; how we have been protected from every danger, and guided in the path of an unexampled prosperity; how from time to time God has called upon us to recognize our glorious destiny; how in the present war we have been chastened with defeat when our eyes

needed opening, and gladdened with victory when our hearts were failing; how, amid conspiracies and unusual perils, our beloved chief magistrate was spared to us for four years, to accomplish deeds that shall be remembered with gratitude by coming millions; we remembered all this, and said "Surely God has been training this nation for a destiny more glorious than has ever been illustrated in history, and the purposes of the Almighty are not to be baffled by a skulking miscreant in a midnight murder." We asked ourselves why Mr. Lincoln was preserved from assassination four years ago. Why by defeats in previous political contests he had been prepared for his elevation to the presidency. Why at this moment, having just brought four millions of God's children into the enjoyment of the heritage which had been violently withheld from them, when the nation had with such unanimity passed their emphatic verdict of approval upon the act, and just as he had uttered in his brief but glorious inaugural the noblest sentiments that have ever been spoken on the steps of the capitol,—sentiments fit to be hugged to men's hearts through the coming ages,—why just now, in the enjoyment of the highest honors and of the unbounded affection of his countrymen, he was allowed thus to be smitten. We asked, and our hearts and judgments declared that he had been preserved until his work was accomplished, that the divine plan in respect to him had been fulfilled, that the time was ripe for his departure.

A little more than four years ago this nation was debating whether it could constitutionally defend itself against the murderous thrusts of traitors. By many it was maintained that we had no right to coerce those who were tearing the government asunder. On these vital questions we were a divided people. It appeared as if the cause of the country would go by default. Its enemies were a united, compact and efficient body, confident of success. Its friends were scattered, distrustful, afraid of the rebels and afraid of each other. The country was full of the most dismal forebodings. There was timidity every where, the darkest treachery in many places, and among others in the national councils. But the peal of rebel guns against the walls

of Sumter awoke the nation from its ignoble hesitancy. We were at once knit together as one man. The quibbles of scheming politicians and rebel sympathizers were blown to the winds. The nation aroused herself and put forth her strength, and as a result, the rebellion is already in its death agony.

And now after four years of war, in our joy at the victories which God had given us on many bloody battle-fields, and at the near prospect of peace, we began again to be divided. Many among us began to talk of magnanimity, of generosity to a fallen foe, of leniency and conciliation. Four years of the foulest treason, of bloody perjury, and of the worst exhibition of bad faith ever made by beings in human form, appeared to have been insufficient to reveal to us the true nature of the vile institution which has been the cause of all our woe. It was proposed to allow the red-handed traitors to return into the full enjoyment of political rights,—to our halls of legislation, and to our highest offices of honor and trust. Jeff. Davis was to be regarded only as an erring brother, and was to be allowed an opportunity again to lay his schemes for becoming President of the United States. General Lee was to have joint command, with General Grant, of the army which he has affected to despise, and done his best to destroy. The distinction between treason and loyalty was to be obliterated in a glorious display of brotherhood and good feeling. From a dream so idle and mischievous, so foolish and criminal, God has aroused us by permitting this last crowning act of fiendish malignity. And Lee and Davis will find themselves exhibited on another stage than that of high political preferment. Guerrilla chiefs will hardly be paroled in large numbers henceforth. And more than all, the hell-born institution,—“the sum of all villainies,”—at whose foul behest all these crimes have been committed, will be swept from the land, and our nation shall set forth upon its new and higher life. Thus by the evil deeds of impotent man are the great purposes of Providence carried forward, human progress is promoted, and the ultimate triumph of truth and liberty secured.

This view of a divine interposition in these affairs is confirmed by

the apparent extent of the conspiracy, and its want of success in every case but that of the President. Why should the Vice-President, a man not wanting in energy and ability, and not supposed to be over-lenient toward rebels,—why should he escape? How shall we account for the almost miraculous surviving of Secretary Seward? Why were no other persons in high office attacked? Why was the conspiracy allowed to startle the nation by one terrific blow, and its murderous hand withheld from further violence? It was by the act of the same beneficent Power that said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,"—the Power whom the wrath of man shall praise, and by whom the remainder of wrath shall be restrained.

Of the lessons taught by the life of Mr. Lincoln we shall find it useful to notice that he was a man of the people. And it is a glorious commentary upon our institutions that they make a career like his possible; that under their benign influence a poor flatboat-man and rail-splitter, whose entire school-going experience comprised less than one year of time, should be exalted to the highest place in the gift of the nation, and should come to be regarded by the millions of his countrymen with a reverence and an affection accorded to no other man of our time. To this distinguishing trait of our country and its policy we refer with a feeling of gratitude to God and to the founders of our government. It is this which marks the nation as the chosen instrument in the hand of the Ruler of Empires for the propagation among men of the true theory of government and of man. For this peculiarity is one that exalts us as a people. By as much as we differ in this respect from other governments, by so much are we higher and nobler than they, nearer the true ideal, nearer the essence and spirit of Christianity. For what is the essence and spirit of our holy religion? Wherein does it differ from the systems that preceded it? Certainly in no respect more thoroughly than in the recognition of the claims of man as man, and not as the possessor of wealth, or as the member of an order or a caste; in making humanity greater and more honorable than all its trappings; in reducing prince and peasant,

lord and beggar, to the same inexorable standard of value, whereby souls only are measured. For the Divine Founder of Christianity was no respecter of persons. He came and dwelt among the lowly of this world. Arrayed in no purple, adorned with no diadem, He appeared in the garb of a Jewish peasant, took up his abode in a despised and obscure hamlet, whence no good, it was thought, could come; mingled with publicans and sinners; fed the poor; comforted the mourners; sought out the haunts of misery; healed diseases,—especially the loathsome ones which gave disgust to the fashionable doctor; called unlettered fishermen, and made them his chosen ambassadors to the race of man; while going about doing good, had not where to lay his head; had no social or political influence; was not a friend of the High Priest or of the Roman Governor; had no means of influencing legislation, or of procuring offices for his friends; was not even a Roman citizen; and finally died by the most ignominious form of execution,—a form never used with a Roman, however dark his crime! Oh how humanity was glorified by the halo which he shed around its obscurest and most degraded forms! And how distasteful to the refined philosophy of heathendom was this humble spirit of universal benevolence! How the proud Platonist, who scorned the vulgar herd, was shocked at the idea of a crucified god! How he spurned the preaching of ignorant, unpolished, inartistic, horny-handed peasants from the Galilean lake! And so it has been through the centuries. Christianity, often despised by the great, the powerful, the refined, has constantly appealed to the great heart of humanity. Its purpose has been to uplift the whole race. Wherever it recognizes a soul, there it bends its energies to save, whether that soul be surrounded by the gilding of a palace, or befouled by the stains of a poverty-stricken vice. And the race has fully responded to the call. Slowly but surely the leaven has worked in human society. The heart of universal man has been touched by the beneficent appeal. Slowly but surely the area of Christendom and the power of Christianity have increased, until at last states have come to be established upon the divine principle of

human equality, exemplified by the lowly Nazarene. This is the corner-stone of our own government; and it is not too much to say that our lamented Chief Magistrate has furnished, in his own life, its noblest and most striking illustration. He is the aptest embodiment, given in history, of what a Christian democracy may do,—of its power to uplift a soul from a lowly place in social life, to a grandeur that rank or wealth could never bestow.

As another lesson worthy to be learned and remembered, we are reminded that Mr. Lincoln was an honest man. Of this the appellation of "Honest Abe," bestowed upon him by his neighbors, may almost be taken as proof. It is very seldom that a whole community unite in crystallizing a man's reputation into a single brief expression without a very near approach to the truth. Our country has furnished numerous politicians and statesmen whom no community would think of designating by any such epithet as "honest." It was applied in this case because it was merited. But when we come to examine the history of the man, we are deeply impressed with this trait in his character. His political career was singularly free from reproach, and also singularly consistent.

Think for one moment of his position at the outset of his political career. A young man of more than common abilities, evidently fit to be a leader in any party to which he might choose to join himself, without powerful friends or connections, dependent upon his talents for whatever success he might achieve,—what could be more natural than for him to throw himself into the arms of the power then dominant? He could have done this without inconsistency, for his political record was just about to begin. There was nothing in the past to bind him. He was free to go wherever he would. How many young men would have spread their sails to the favoring breeze! With how many would the sole question have been, "With which party is success?" "Which bestows honors and confers profits?" "Where will skill and good abilities earn the highest rewards?" And would such a course be regarded as at all dishonorable, or inconsistent with moral rectitude, as measured by ordinary standards? Not in the least.

It is considered the right of young men to make the best terms they can with fortune and the world. It is hardly fashionable to be very nice in consulting conscience on such a point.

But not so thought Abraham Lincoln. His moral sense was too nice to make his politics merely subservient to his interests. He supported or opposed public measures as they seemed to him right and beneficent, or the opposite. With him a vote was a matter of conscience. He adopted his political theories because he thought they were right, and in their defense he was ready to incur any sacrifice. "Rather than surrender his principles, he would prefer to be assassinated on the spot,"—so he tells us in words that seem prophetic.

And so this popular young lawyer, with talents fitting him to occupy the highest places, buried himself in what seemed an impenetrable obscurity by joining a hopeless political minority, and by adhering to its fortunes with unwavering fidelity. In a county and state giving overwhelming democratic majorities, he became a whig, from a full and earnest conviction of the truth and justice of the principles and measures of that party. And never for one moment did he desert those principles. For twenty years or more, he battled more or less constantly against a power that, he thought, was working harm to the country,—a power that in Illinois and in Sangamon county was invincible at the polls, except when, once or twice, his personal popularity was able to overcome it. And more than this: In a community where the slightest taint of anti-slavery was sure death to a politician, he never shrunk from denouncing the institution as a great wrong. "If slavery is not wrong, then nothing is wrong,"—this was the key of all his utterances on the great question. While in Congress, during the brief two years of his membership, he stood repeatedly with J. R. Giddings in favor of motions looking to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and voted forty-two times for the Wilmot Proviso, excluding slavery from the territory acquired from Mexico. In his famous debate with Douglas in 1858, there was no holding-back of his old convictions. Every where he insisted on the wrong of slavery, and deprecated the admission of more slave states into the

Union. Like every other law-abiding man, he desired that the constitutional rights of the South should be maintained; and he persevered in this desire until, by an act of insane and perfidious war, they cut themselves off from every right. In these days of sudden conversion to the rankest abolitionism, when men who but three years ago were applauding the enormities of a New-York riot are shouting themselves hoarse in behalf of negro suffrage; when old-fashioned abolitionists are made dizzy by their efforts to keep pace with the radicalism of former McClellan men; when visions of past offices have so intensified in many hearts the hatred of slavery and the love of the negro,—it is refreshing to find one man in high place who has not deemed it necessary to change his views on great principles,—who has professed the same faith, as to essentials, for near thirty years of political experience. Indeed, the history of Mr. Lincoln for that period, from 1836 to 1865 amazes one in this respect. It is hardly too much to say that at the day of his death he stood very near, as to great fundamental principles, to his position thirty years before. Very few men, at all eminent in polities, have moved so little as he. There has always been the same noble adhesion to the genuine spirit of democracy, the same love of every form of justice and equality, the same abhorrence of injustice and tyranny.

And his life is a noble illustration of the adage that “Honesty is the best policy.” Not that this adage furnishes a sufficient reason for being honest. The honesty that is induced by a desire to secure some personal advantage is hardly worth the name. There are some kinds of honesty, too, that, in the view of keen-sighted men, are very bad policy. The true reward of personal integrity is not what is usually called personal advantage. But God has so adjusted the laws of human life that the true good of the individual does follow the strictest honesty. And so it was in the case of Mr. Lincoln. His life was a glorious success. Not a man has ever had his name written in the annals of time who would not be a gainer by exchanging his fame for that of our martyred Chief Magistrate. When History is making up her lists, and the noble ones of all time are arranged in a glorious

company, what form among them all will shine brighter than his? Bright in a persistent purpose to do the right as far as he saw it; in his manly simplicity; in his unshaken trust in God and faith in man,—trusting even the assassin that was about to slay him, and never failing to confide to the full in the people whom he governed; and above all, bright in the glorious privilege of sacrificing his life for his country and his principles. As an undying possession, as a heritage for all the ages, give me the clear fame of Abraham Lincoln, rather than the most magnificent reputation built up by the proudest conqueror that ever stained his guilty blade in the blood of his fellow man!

How many men of transcendent mental powers have sought to be President of the United States? How many have gazed on the shining goal with longing but unsatisfied eyes? Henry Clay, the silver-tongued, whose fervid eloquence stirred the hearts of his admiring countrymen from sea to sea and from lake to gulf, with a high ambition, "the last infirmity of noble minds," strove to clutch the coveted prize; and his last days were darkened by the cloud of a sad disappointment, because he failed to reach it. Daniel Webster, one of the most nobly endowed intellects of all time, who by his masterly logic and glowing imagination guided the thoughts and shaped the opinions of millions of thinking freemen, pursued through a long and honored life the same glittering phantom; and when at last, after leading him through bogs and quagmires of political chicanery, it finally and for ever eluded him, he sought his secluded home in Marshfield, and died of a broken heart; while the Atlantic waves, rolling almost at his bedside, seemed in a sad, monotonous and majestic dirge to wail over the crushing of his hopes! Other eminent names rush to the memory, of gifted citizens who have fallen in the same unsatisfying pursuit, after exhausting, by themselves or their friends, every political art that could be brought to bear upon the point. But Abraham Lincoln, with no brilliant accomplishments, no such eloquence as Clay's, no such ponderous intellect as Webster's, with little skill in manipulating parties, far from being a match for his rival Douglas in managing the public sentiment and in turning it to his own advantage,—indeed

with nothing but his straight-forward honesty to distinguish him from many other men,— Abraham Lincoln found the presidential mansion opening its doors and inviting him to enter: the post stood candidate for him. Plain, simple, unadorned,— the people's man,— he was called by his countrymen to the great office, simply because they believed him an honest man,— one whose promises could be trusted, one who would practice no dishonest jugglery or legerdemain. And not only did they call him to the highest office in their gift, but they bestowed upon him their heart treasures,— their esteem, their confidence, and their affection, more lavishly than upon any other man since Washington! When will our public men learn that the truest and only satisfactory success can be secured in no way but by an honest and sincere devotion to the public weal! May we not hope that by the terrible experience of the last four years we have been taught something of the value of principle as opposed to mere management, of downright integrity as opposed to dishonest intrigue? How during this terrible contest men have been tried! How great principles have risen in unwonted might, and demanded the allegiance of all men! What a laying-aside have we seen of supple-jointed, limber-backed politicians! How the miserable quibbles and intricate nothings of the political arena have been swept out of sight, and men have been compelled to engage in discussing momentous questions that are to influence mankind for ages! And shall this be all in vain? Are our public men to be the same race of pigmy schemers and supple flunkeys that we have sometimes seen? Shall we not have, for a time at least, as a result of this war, a race of stalwart men, honest, straight-forward, trusting in God and the right,— men, in short, after the similitude of Abraham Lincoln?

But not only was Mr. Lincoln of the people and honest. He was also a great man. We do not by this mean that he possessed all kinds of greatness in the highest degree. But we do affirm that he was endowed with an unusually full share of the highest kind of greatness. Dr. Channing, in his admirable and truthful analysis of the character of Napoleon Bonaparte, notes three principal forms of greatness. And

among these, he assigns the highest place to moral greatness, that which lifts the soul above all things mean and untruthful, and makes it willing to suffer any pain rather than renounce its allegiance to God and the truth. This is the greatness that has characterized the world's heroes and martyrs, that has lifted them up into a calm and serene abnegation of self, into a lofty and unhesitating devotion to duty, into an unfaltering conviction that in the hands of the good God, all things, whether joyous or sorrowful, will in the end help to bring about the highest good. This type of character,—this great moral power,—marked Mr. Lincoln through his whole life. It enabled him to use life's experiences for his own and others' good. The career of a Mississippi boatman,—so fatal to many young men, because they have not moral power to convert its boisterous experiences into steps in manly progress,—was to him, no doubt, a source of improvement in the power to resist temptation. He was a stronger man for this experience, in all the elements that go to form a noble character. A man that can draw moral nourishment from the turbid influences of such a life must surely have true greatness conceded to him. A little man,—little in the essentials of a true manhood,—could never digest such materials into that noblest product of the divine hand, an honest man. This power to transmute the evil of this world into a sterling Christian character, to gather honey from the thorns and nettles of an unpropitious experience, to turn the darts of the devil against him who hurled them forth,—this is a power allied to that of God himself, and stamps its possessor with the unmistakable impress of true greatness!

But Mr. Lincoln was also great in his simplicity, and in his full confidence in the ultimate success of the Right. Little men are ever seeking circuitous paths,—ever striving to prop up their feebleness by intrigue and strategy. It takes a strong mind to rely implicitly and calmly upon the final triumph of truth and justice. The small craft toss and plunge with every wave that rises; but the vast steamship plows her way through their midst, never deviating from her true course. Thus great minds, guided by a celestial light, spurn

every solicitation that would draw them aside into the paths of chicanery and deceit. They see so clearly the end from the beginning, they comprehend so fully the great purpose of life, that they can not prevail upon themselves to stoop to the little by-plays of faction. And they always succeed, because their lives are in harmony with the great plan of the universe !

And Mr. Lincoln was also great in his opportunities. In this respect, certainly, no man has ever exceeded him. Think for one moment of what he has been permitted to do ! It was his good fortune to be at the head of this great nation when, in the providence of God, it became necessary to decide the most momentous question it has ever had under consideration,—the question whether Liberty was to be made universal, or to be confined to a class or a race,—the question whether, in our dealings with all the inhabitants of this great country, we were willing to adopt the Golden Rule—to do unto others as we would have them do to us. Mr. Lincoln has been compared to George Washington, and certainly there is much in their characters that is alike. There is the same stalwart honesty, the same abhorrence of trickery and scheming, the same serene faith in the final triumph of a good cause, shining brightest, in the case of both, in the darkest hour. But compare the relative positions of the two men. Washington led the nation in its struggle for existence. The people of the colonies had been oppressed by the mother country. Their rights had been invaded. Taxes had been unjustly levied. In various ways, commerce and industry had been crippled. Ports had been closed against trade. The manufacture of certain articles of necessity and utility had been prohibited by law. It was apparent that the British Government was unwilling to allow the colonies the rights enjoyed by Englishmen. To these unjust exactions, these tyrannical assumptions of power, it was determined no longer to submit. And so the patriots of '75 took up arms in their own defense. They saw that if their rights were ever secured to them, it must be by their own valor and resolution. And a sublime spectacle it was to see three millions of peaceful men rise in arms against a mighty empire. We

shall never cease to revere the memories of those noble men, who were willing to pledge their "fortunes, their lives, and their sacred honor," in order to secure, to themselves and their posterity, the blessings of liberty.

In 1861 there was an attempt, violent and bloody, to undo the work of the fathers. It seemed as if the fair fabric reared by their hands at such fearful cost of blood and treasure was about to be ground into the dust under the heel of a treason darker and bloodier than the world had ever seen. Before this unhallowed power every thing seemed about to give way. It was stalking triumphant over the land. Great states yielded, one after another, and enrolled themselves among its partisans. The terrible upheaval seemed to include the continent in its baleful undulations. And now it was that Mr. Lincoln appeared as the preserver of the republic. By his unselfish patriotism, his patience and wisdom, he proved himself worthy to be the successor of Washington, to be the savior of the nation of which Washington was the father. And in many respects, surely, his task was more difficult than that of his immortal predecessor. When he came into power, the arm of the government was paralyzed. Its proper guardians had become its betrayers and deadly foes. Foreign nations looked with ill-concealed pleasure upon the threatened downfall of the great republic. A large majority of those who had been accustomed to control its affairs were open and active in the nefarious work. To the true patriot it was surely a dreary and appalling prospect. How well, under the guidance of our great and good leader, we have weathered the storm, the annalist will never be weary of telling. In relating the events of these heroic times, sober history will glow with an unwonted eloquence.

But in this contest there was more at stake than the saving of the country. Our fathers thought it possible to establish a republic in which only a part of the people should be citizens,—in some portions of which there should be a servile class. They hoped that the speck of darkness,—a half-million of slaves,—would hardly obscure the glory of the new democracy. Eighty years of trial has taught us better.

We know that so long as men are selfish, they never will relinquish the possession of irresponsible power over their fellows. And we know, too, that the possession of such power intensifies the love of it,—that, year by year, the dominant race clings with more and more tenacity to its authority,—that slavery once thoroughly established will never knowingly abolish itself. Before us in this contest, then, was the question of the freedom, not of a half-million bondmen, but of eight times that number. True, the institution in the struggle had become identified with the treason that was clutching at the nation's life,—had in fact instigated that treason in its own interest and behalf. But many believed the country could be saved without destroying slavery. So that the problem of putting an end to this institution was, to some extent, presented to the people and President as an independent enterprise. That is, the nation and President were called on to decide whether the enfranchisement of four million human beings should be undertaken by the government; whether the nation would put forth its energies, expend its treasure and shed its blood, for an alien race,—a race despised, and degraded by centuries of oppression,—a race that was declared to be incurably indolent, and unfit for freedom; a race, we were told, that would never, if released from involuntary toil, put forth vigor enough to earn its own living. This race Abraham Lincoln declared should be free. By a stroke of his pen he conferred upon them the inestimable blessing of the ownership of themselves. By his glorious proclamation of January 1st, 1863, he converted them from chattels into men. He wiped the dark stain from the fair escutcheon of our country, and made it indeed and in truth the land of the free as well as the home of the brave. Our fathers, in the revolution, fought under Washington, gloriously, nobly, and from principle; but it was for themselves. It was to remove the yoke from their own necks that they stood their ground at Bunker Hill, fought in the terrible heat of Monmouth, and waited in long and dreary desolation at Valley Forge. But for us in our late conflict it must be conceded that, after all deductions are made for our hesitation in adopting the emancipation policy, notwithstanding our efforts to make terms

with slavery, the war has been to a great extent carried on for the purpose of "proclaiming liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof." Mr. Lincoln has enjoyed the honor of leading the nation in its efforts for the oppressed. We have fought not for ourselves alone, but for the poor, the weak, the down-trodden. And inasmuch as it is more blessed to give than to receive, to toil and incur danger in others' behalf than to labor for ourselves; inasmuch as doing a deed of kindness to one of the least of God's suffering children is the same as doing it to the master himself,—then surely Lincoln the Liberator, contending for a grand unselfish and beneficent idea, is greater, in his opportunities and his position, than Washington the Patriot, fighting for the freedom of his native land.

I repeat, then, Mr. Lincoln was a great man: great in his power over life's experiences; great in his simple-hearted trust in God and the Right; incomparably great in his unrivaled opportunities.

And how sublimely great was he in his glorious death! Dying as he did, and in so noble a cause, his immortality, the sweet memory of him in the hearts of his countrymen, in the literature of his country and of the world, wherever the names of the good and great are treasured as rich gifts from the past, is secured beyond doubt or peradventure. When will the true lover of his country, he who is proud of her in proportion as she is pure, humane, just, virtuous, and free,—when will he forget Mr. Lincoln, her best embodiment of all these excellences? At what remote point of the far-distant future, as it stretches adown the coming centuries, will the freedman's children, lifted by liberty into a higher manhood, cease to speak the praises of their great Emancipator? And when will the nations of the earth, wherever a spark of justice or humanity is cherished, forget to execrate the miscreant who could horrify the civilized world and plunge it into a heartfelt sorrow by doing a deed so atrocious that history furnishes no parallel to it? Surely the memory of our murdered President will be preserved in the grateful hearts of coming millions, when those of most great men, so called, shall have passed into irretrievable oblivion.

And what a power for good will this memory be! What a purifying and ennobling influence will it exert upon the young men of our land! How mightily will it recommend to them the virtues of industry, honesty, and patience! Success in life has been so long associated with intrigue and overreaching, that there is a constant and potent force operating to blunt the moral sensibilities of the young. The apparently great men of this world have been, to a great extent, unscrupulous men. Integrity, honest industry, fair dealing, have been regarded not only as unfashionable, but also as unprofitable. We thank God, then, that in the person of Mr. Lincoln these humble traits of character have been glorified! That for once they have been joined with the most brilliant success and the most magnificent reputation! How through the ages will the memory of this honored name plead with men in behalf of these virtues!

And what a source of strength will this noble fame be to down-trodden humanity every where! How it will rekindle the hope of the prisoner in his dungeon, and of the slave at his toil! How it will hasten the coming of that glorious day when the shackles shall fall from every limb, and the light of liberty shall shine into every soul! "If the North succeeds," is a saying attributed to Carlyle, "England goes to democracy by express train." Most true, O thou Prophet of the Old Dispensation. And not England only, but all the world. The oppressed millions of every land will catch the glitter of our triumphant bayonets. Our great example will stir anew the love of liberty in every soul of man, and the entire race, redeemed from political thralldom, shall yet praise God for the life, and death of ABRAHAM LINCOLN!